

Washington – U.S. Representative Sanford Bishop today applauded the passage of a revised version of the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill which includes \$350 million to replace Martin Army Community Hospital at Fort Benning. Bishop noted that the latest version of the bill was negotiated and supported by Democratic and Republican leaders and the White House.

“I am very pleased the chief negotiators of this bill recognized the importance of replacing some of our nation’s oldest military medical facilities. Providing our men and women in uniform access to modern, state-of-the-art medical facilities is simply the right thing to do,” said Congressman Bishop.

The funding is part of a \$860 million provision to rebuild and address critical infrastructure needs at other aging military hospitals in order to prevent the types of problems that surfaced at Walter Reed Army Medical Center last year.

Martin Army Hospital was constructed in 1957 and is one of the oldest in the Army Medical Department inventory. The Army has identified Martin Army Hospital as the top priority hospital replacement project in the United States due to its age and future requirements as Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) and Global Rebasing operations move forward. The Army estimates that, eventually, up to 100,000 soldiers, military trainees, retirees, civilians, and their families will be eligible to use the new hospital.

In recent years, the services have identified billions of dollars in recapitalization requirements for which current budgetary allotments are insufficient, but which desperately need funding due to the condition of the facilities. The funding problems will be exacerbated in the immediate future as installations like Fort Benning add thousands of personnel, dependent families, and departments due to BRAC, and as more wounded soldiers return from service in Iraq and Afghanistan. The allocations for military medical facilities in the Emergency Supplemental will relieve some pressure on the backlog of projects needing funding.

The Emergency Supplemental was taken up as two amendments. The first provides funding for the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and was approved 268-155. The second, which includes funding for Martin Army Hospital and addresses some of the country’s other domestic emergencies such as a modern-day GI Bill for veterans, disaster aid for flooding in the Midwest and extended unemployment insurance for those affected by the economic downturn, was approved 416-12.

The Senate is expected to pass a similar version of the measure next week.

A link to a complete summary of the bill can be found on the House Appropriations committee’s website.